J. STALIN

Address to the Graduates from the Red Army Academies

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ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATES FROM THE RED ARMY ACADEMIES

Delivered in the Kremlin, May 4, 1935

Comrades, it cannot be denied that we have recently achieved important successes both in the sphere of construction and in the sphere of administration. In this connection there is too much talk about the merits of chiefs, about the merits of leaders. All or nearly all our achievements are ascribed to them. That, of course, is wrong, it is incorrect. It is not merely a matter of leaders. But it is not of this I wanted to speak today. I should like to say a few words about cadres, about our cadres in general and about the cadres of our Red Army in particular.

You know that we inherited from the olden days a technically backward, impoverished and ruined country. Ruined by four years of imperialist war, and ruined again by three years of civil war, a country with a semi-literate population, with a low technical level, with isolated industrial oases lost in a welter of minute peasant farms—such was the country we inherited from the past. The problem was to transfer this country from the lines of medieval darkness to the lines of modern industry

and mechanized agriculture. The problem, as you see, was a serious and difficult one. The question that confronted us was that *either* we solve this problem in the shortest possible time and consolidate socialism in our country, *or* we do not solve it, in which case our country—technically weak and culturally unenlightened—would lose its independence and become a stake in the game of the imperialist powers.

At that time our country was passing through a period of acute famine in technical resources. There were not enough machines for industry. There were no machines for agriculture. There were no machines for transport. There was not that elementary technical base without which the industrial transformation of a country is inconceivable. All that existed were isolated preliminary requisites for the creation of such a base. A first-class industry had to be created. This industry had to be so directed as to be capable of technically reorganizing not only industry, but also our agriculture and our railway transport. And for this it was necessary to make sacrifices and to impose the most rigorous economy in everything; it was necessary to economize on food, on schools and on textiles, in order to accumulate the funds required for the creation of industry. There was no other way of overcoming the famine in technical resources. So Lenin taught us, and in this matter we followed in the footsteps of Lenin.

Naturally, in so great and difficult a matter unvarying and rapid success could not be expected. In a matter like

this success comes only after several years. We had therefore to arm ourselves with strong nerves, Bolshevik grit and stubborn patience in order to counteract the first failures and to march unswervingly towards the great goal, without permitting any wavering or uncertainty in our ranks.

You know that we set about this task in precisely this way. But not all our comrades had the necessary spirit, patience and grit. Among our comrades there proved to be people who at the first difficulties began to call for a retreat. Let bygones be bygones, it is said. That, of course, is true. But man is endowed with memory, and when summing up the results of our work one involuntarily recalls the past. (*Amusement.*) Well then, there were comrades among us who were scared by the difficulties and began to call on the Party to retreat. They said: "What is the good of your industrialization and collectivization, your machines, iron and steel industry, tractors, combines, automobiles? It would be better if you gave us more textiles, if you bought more raw materials for the production of consumers' goods and gave the population more of the small things which adorn the life of man. The creation of industry, and a first-class industry at that, when we are so backward, is a dangerous dream."

Of course, we could have used the three billion rubles of foreign currency obtained as a result of the severest economy, and spent on the creation of our industry, for the importation of raw materials and for increasing the

production of articles of general consumption. That is also a kind of "plan." But with such a "plan" we should not have had a metallurgical industry, or a machine-building industry, or tractors and automobiles, or aeroplanes and tanks. We should have found ourselves unarmed in face of the external foe. We should have undermined the foundations of socialism in our country. We should have found ourselves in captivity to the bourgeoisie, home and foreign.

It is evident that a choice had to be made between two plans: between the plan of retreat, leading, and bound to lead, to the defeat of socialism, and the plan of advance, which led and, as you know, has already led to the victory of socialism in our country.

We chose the plan of advance and moved forward along the Leninist road, brushing those comrades aside, as being people who saw something only when it was under their noses, but who closed their eyes to the immediate future of our country, to the future of socialism in our country.

But these comrades did not always confine themselves to criticism and passive resistance. They threatened to raise a revolt in the Party against the Central Committee. More, they threatened some of us with bullets. Evidently, they reckoned on frightening us and compelling us to leave the Leninist road. These people, apparently, forgot that we Bolsheviks are people of a special cut. They forgot that you cannot frighten Bolsheviks by difficulties or by threats. They forgot that we

were forged by the great Lenin, our leader, our teacher, our father, who did not know fear in the fight and did not recognize it. They forgot that the more the enemies rage and the more hysterical the foes within the Party become, the more red-hot the Bolsheviks become for fresh struggles and the more vigorously they push forward.

Of course, it never even occurred to us to leave the Leninist road. More, having established ourselves on this road, we pushed forward still more vigorously, brushing every obstacle from our path. It is true that in our course we were obliged to handle some of these comrades roughly. But you cannot help that. I must confess that I too took a hand in this business. (*Loud cheers.*)

Yes, comrades, we proceeded confidently and vigorously along the road of industrializing and collectivizing our country. And now we may consider that the road has been traversed.

Everybody now admits that we have achieved tremendous successes along this road. Everybody now admits that we already have a powerful, first-class industry, a powerful mechanized agriculture, a growing and improving transport system, an organized and excellently equipped Red Army.

This means that we have in the main outlived the period of famine in technical resources.

But, having outlived the period of famine in technical resources, we have entered a new period, a period, I

would say, of famine in the matter of people, in the matter of cadres, in the matter of workers capable of harnessing technique and advancing it. The point is that we have factories, mills, collective farms, Soviet farms, an army; we have technique for all this; but we lack people with sufficient experience to squeeze out of technique all that can be squeezed out of it. Formerly, we used to say that "technique decides everything." This slogan helped us in this respect, that we put an end to the famine in technical resources and created an extensive technical base in every branch of activity for the equipment of our people with first-class technique. That is very good. But it is very, very far from enough. In order to set technique going and to utilize it to the full, we need people who have mastered technique, we need cadres capable of mastering and utilizing this technique according to all the rules of the art. Without people who have mastered technique, technique is dead. Technique in the charge of people who have mastered technique can and should perform miracles. If in our first-class mills and factories, in our Soviet farms and collective farms and in our Red Army we had sufficient cadres capable of harnessing this technique, our country would secure results three times and four times greater than at present. That is why emphasis must now be laid on people, on cadres, on workers who have mastered technique. That is why the old slogan, "Technique decides everything," which is a reflection of a period we have already passed through, a period in which we suffered from a famine

in technical resources, must now be replaced by a new slogan, the slogan "Cadres decide everything." That is the main thing now.

Can it be said that our people have fully understood and realized the great significance of this new slogan? I would not say that. Otherwise, there would not have been the outrageous attitude towards people, towards cadres, towards workers, which we not infrequently observe in practice. The slogan "Cadres decide everything" demands that our leaders should display the most solicitous attitude towards our workers, "little" and "big," no matter in what sphere they are engaged, cultivating them assiduously, assisting them when they need support, encouraging them when they display their first successes, advancing them, and so forth. Yet, in practice we meet in a number of cases with a soulless, bureaucratic and positively outrageous attitude towards workers. This, indeed, explains why instead of being studied, and placed at their posts only after being studied, people are frequently flung about like pawns. People have learnt how to value machinery and to make reports of how many machines we have in our mills and factories. But I do not know of one instance when a report was made with equal zest of the number of people we have developed in a given period, how we assisted people to grow and become tempered in their work. How is this to be explained? It is to be explained by the fact that we have not yet learnt to value people, to value workers, to value cadres.

I recall an incident in Siberia, where I was at one time in exile. It was in the spring, at the time of the spring floods. About thirty men went to the river to pull out timber which had been carried away by the vast, swollen river. Towards evening they returned to the village, but with one comrade missing. When asked where the thirtieth man was, they unconcernedly replied that the thirtieth man had "remained there." To my question, "How do you mean, remained there?" they replied with the same unconcern, "Why ask—drowned, of course." And thereupon one of them began to hurry away, saying, "I have got to go and water the mare." When I reproached them for having more concern for animals than for men, one of them, amid the general approval of the rest, said, "Why should we be concerned about men? We can always make men. But a mare . . . just try and make a mare." (*Amusement.*) Here you have a case, not very significant perhaps, but very characteristic. It seems to me that the indifference shown by certain of our leaders to people, to cadres, and their inability to value people, is a survival of that strange attitude of man to man displayed in the episode in far-off Siberia just related.

And so, comrades, if we want successfully to overcome the famine in the matter of people and to provide our country with sufficient cadres capable of advancing technique and setting it going, we must first of all learn to value people, to value cadres, to value every worker capable of benefiting our common cause. It is time to

realize that of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and most decisive is people, cadres. It must be realized that under our present conditions "cadres decide everything." If we have good and numerous cadres in industry, agriculture, transport and the army—our country will be invincible. If we do not have such cadres—we shall be lame on both feet.

In concluding my speech, permit me to offer a toast to the health and success of our graduates from the Red Army Academy. I wish them success in the cause of organizing and leading the defence of our country.

Comrades, you have graduated from the academy, a school in which you received your first steeling. But school is only a preparatory stage. Cadres receive their real steeling in actual work, outside school, in fighting difficulties, in overcoming difficulties. Remember, comrades, that only those cadres are any good who do not fear difficulties, who do not hide from difficulties, but who, on the contrary, go out to meet difficulties, in order to overcome them and eliminate them. It is only in combating difficulties that real cadres are forged. And if our army possesses genuinely steeled cadres in sufficient numbers, it will be invincible.

Your health, comrades! (*Stormy applause. All rise. Loud cheers for Stalin.*)

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